

The article by Mr. Rucklidge in the June Newsletter touches on what is probably the most fascinating aspect of Perfin collecting. There can be little merit in a collection of unidentified perfins and most collectors must, like myself, have spent many enjoyable hours searching out from little scraps of available information the identities of perfin users. An article illustrating some successes in this field by Mr. Muggleton and myself appeared in STAMP COLLECTING in March, 1959 •

Perfins often turn up on small pieces of card or envelope which bear perhaps only a small part of the name, address, telephone number, telegraphic address, trade or business, etc., of the user, and it can be very irritating to be unable to complete the identity.

Research in some form or another is clearly indicated and in this nothing can be more invaluable than a few of the right reference books which in many cases, can provide the direct answer to the clues available.

After spending many cold hours in cheerless library reference rooms, I decided that I would enjoy doing my research much more at home if only I could get together a few reference books of my own. Although one or two of the books I wanted, if purchased new, would have cost much more than I could afford, I found that I was able to get older copies quite cheaply from secondhand bookshops and from friends working in offices. The following details of my 'library' may be of interest to other members:

1 GENERAL

(i) STOCK EXCHANGE OFFICIAL YEAR BOOK (1949 and 1959)

This, in my opinion, is the most useful of all reference books. It is published annually in two volumes by authority of the Stock Exchange by Messrs. THOMAS SKINNER & CO. (a subsidiary of KELLY'S DIRECTORIES). The number printed is limited to that previously ordered - this mostly by Stockbrokers, Bankers, Lawyers, Investment Advisers and a few others.

The two volumes, which together weigh about 10 lbs, contain particulars of over 8,000 companies whose securities are quoted on Stock Exchanges in Great Britain. This number may not seem large, but the "potted history" given in respect of each company lists all subsidiaries, amalgamations, etc. UNILEVER, for instance, is stated to control about 43 smaller companies, all of which are listed, including such perfin users as D. & W. GIBBS LTD., LEVER BROTHERS, PORT SUNLIGHT LIMITED, A. & F. PEARS LTD., VAN DEN BERGHS & JURGENS LTD. and BRITISH OIL & CAKE MILLS LTD. All companies are listed in the index which contains, at a rough estimate, about 25,000 references.

Particulars of companies supplied include the addresses of the registered offices with telephone numbers and telegraphic addresses, names of directors, date the company was formed, details of any changes of name, nature of business and situation of factories, and so on. There is also a very useful classified index in which companies operating similar types of business are grouped together.

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(ii) KELLY'S DIRECTORIES

Kelly's Directories Ltd., of 186 Strand, London, W.C.2, produce not only the Post Office London Directory, but also British Town Directories which include Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, etc., and Local Directories, including smaller provincial towns such as Bath, Reading, Southampton, Norwich, etc. The layout of all the directories is basically the same as the London Directory, of which I have three copies (1933, 1948 and 1959), the main features, from my point of view being:

- (a) List of streets in alphabetical order with most street numbers and names of occupiers of all but some residential property. This is post helpful for completing portions of addresses and of tracking down the firms whose stamps are used by "the people of next door".
- (b) An alphabetical directory of commercial and professional firms giving the full address, telephone number and telegraphic address, if any. The value of this is obvious.
- (c) A classified list of the above commercial and professional firms under such headings as Booksellers, Shipbrokers, Printers, etc.
- (d) There are also separate directories dealing with lawyers, bankers. municipal, etc.

(iii) REGISTER OF DEFUNCT AND OTHER COMPANIES

As mentioned previously, the Stock i~xchange Year book contains details of companies which are still in business including those which have amalgamated, been taken over etc. Many companies have, however; gone into liquidation, been nationalised, struck off or met some similar fate, and these are listed in the Register of Defunct and other Companies. The list includes about 23,000 which have fallen by the wayside since 1875, among them many former perfin users.

(iv) SELLS DIRECTORY OF REGISTERED TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESSES

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To be continued

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In 1885 Mr. Henry Sell first published a list of the abbreviated telegraphic addresses which he had been collecting from various sources ever since the system had been publicly announced by the Post Office. Eight years later, in 1893, the Postmaster-General consented to supply Mr. Sell with the Officials Lists so that ever since 1894 Sell's Directory has been the only authorised publication listing telegraphic addresses.

The directory, now published by Business Dictionaries Limited, is divided into two sections, London and Country (including Ireland). Each section contains two parts, (a) a list of all registered users of telegraphic addresses in alphabetical order giving the nature of the business, address, telephone number and telegraphic address of each, and (b) a list of the telegraphic addresses alphabetically arranged with marginal references to part (a).

The only unsatisfactory feature about Sell's Directory, from the Perfin collector's point of view, is that once a telegraphic address is removed from the Register it is not recorded elsewhere. There is, in fact, no Defunct Register as there is for the Stock Exchange 'Official Year Book, although it is understandable that such a publication would have little or no commercial demand. This puts us in a position of being unable to identify the users of earlier perfins where a telegraphic address, no longer in use, is the only available clue. My edition of Sell's is for 1957, and although I have tried to obtain an earlier copy, I have been unsuccessful. Messrs. Fayles have advertised on my behalf throughout the book trade without obtaining an offer of one, so that my suggestions by other members as to how one might be obtained will be appreciated.

(v) TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES

I have a number of fairly up-to-date telephone directories covering London and various other areas, but these are only very occasionally useful, most of their information being contained in Kellys and Sell's. Old directories would, undoubtedly, be useful, i.e., those published when (in London at least) the numbers preceded the exchange, but these seem to be unobtainable.

2 RAILWAYS

BRADSHAW'S RAILWAY MANUAL, SHAREHOLDERS GUIDE AND DIRECTORY

A number of railway companies were among the early users of perfins, but with the grouping of 1923 into the four large groups (LMS, LNER, GWR, and SR) and subsequent nationalisation, there are only a handful or so of railway perfins still in use to-day. Having several stamps bearing perforations ending in the letter 'R', which I strongly suspected to be railways I wrote to 'The Railway Magazine' asking if they could recommend a book which listed all railway companies since the early days. In their reply they suggested that I could do no better than 'Bradshaws' and, after several enquiries of booksellers, I was successful in obtaining a copy for 1908 for ten shillings from a specialist railway bookseller at Northwood, Middlesex.

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Bradshaws for 1908 lists about 1,300 railway companies, of which something like 1,000 were then or at some time during the previous fifty years, operating in the British Isles. Principal towns and districts served are in many cases given together with dates of formation of the companies, length of lines operated and many other details.

3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANUAL AND DIRECTORY

County and Local Councils must constitute the largest single class of perfin users today, possibly this is because council officials appreciate that stamps purchased from ratepayers money and distributed to miscellaneous departments are particularly liable to find their way on to private letters.

The Manual and Directory, of which I have a copy for 1952, (there is also a copy in the Group Library) lists all County, Borough, Urban and Rural District Councils in alphabetical order which can be very useful for solving what is clearly a local council perfin but where perhaps the only clue is part of a postmark. To give just one example, I came across a modern perfin KR/DC postmarked Helston, Cornwall, which I was quickly able to identify as Kerrier R.D.C. There is actually no town of Kerrier and the same applies to Deben R.D.C., Suffolk and Chanctonbury R.D.C., Sussex and several others.

Another useful feature is a section containing particulars of all Regional Hospital Boards and Hospital Nianagement Committees.

4 POSTMARKS

Modern perfins seem to have an unfortunate knack of becoming divorced from their covers and invariably being cancelled by a few wavy lines or part of a slogan are fated to spend the rest of their lives in the un-identified section of one's collection.

One clear advantage the earlier perfins have over those in use today is that they invariably bear a circular or numbered cancellation which can help towards identification, or at least to establish the place where the user was to be found.

A very useful book to help with numbered cancellations is 'British Post Office Numbers 1844 - 1906' by G. Brumell - published by R.C. Alook Limited of 11 Regent Street, Cheltenham. In this book are lists of Post Offices all over the British Isles with the numbers assigned to them. These are also set out separately in numerical order so that the place of origin of a perfin bearing a numbered cancellation can very soon be established.

To help with modern postmarks, probably the most useful reference book can be obtained from the local post office for a few shillings, namely 'Post Offices in the United Kingdom'. This I have found invaluable especially where a stamp bears only the first few letters of the postmark or part of the particulars of a Branch Office.

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In these notes I have mentioned only reference books which I have in my own 'library'. I would welcome details of any further books which other collectors have found useful in establishing the identities of perfin users.